



Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Graduate Research Posters

Graduate School

2020

Food Choice as a Signal of Racial Identity


Danyel Smith

Virginia Commonwealth University

Shawn C.T. Jones, PhD

Nao Hagiwara, PhD

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/gradposters>

 Part of the [Health Psychology Commons](#)

Downloaded from

Smith, Danyel; Jones, PhD, Shawn C.T.; and Hagiwara, PhD, Nao, "Food Choice as a Signal of Racial Identity" (2020). *Graduate Research Posters*. Poster 74.

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/gradposters/74>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Posters by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

Food Choice as a Signal of Racial Identity

Danyel Smith, Shawn C.T. Jones, PhD., and Nao Hagiwara, PhD.
Department of Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University

INTRODUCTION

- People use visual and audible cues (e.g., language, physical appearance, clothing) to make judgments about others' social identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender).
- Perceived social identity then can affect both inter- and intra-group relations.
 - White Americans tend to respond negatively to African Americans who express stronger racial identity.
 - African Americans tend to respond negatively to ingroup members who do not express/bolster their racial identity.
- Food has yet to be examined as a cue of racial identity.
 - Food and diet reflect collective identity; “Soul Food” is a culturally-significant diet (e.g. chitterlings, fried chicken, etc.) to African Americans



RESEARCH QUESTION

- Do people perceive and react differently to African Americans who prefer to eat “Soul food” (which is a culturally concordant diet) vs. “fresh salad” (which is a culturally discordant diet)?

Correspondence should be sent to Danyel I. Smith
(smithdi@vcu.edu)

METHODS

Participants:

- 365 VCU undergraduate students [63.3% White & 36.7% Black, 74.2% cis-women, age $M = 19.39$ ($SD = 3.23$)]
- Recruited via the Psychology Department Online Participant Pool (SONA)

Procedure:

- Participants read a cover story indicating that the purpose of the research was to examine impression formation based on limited amounts of information.
- Participants first provided their personal information that would be shared with “another student.”
- Next, participants reviewed personal information ostensibly provided by another student.

Manipulation of student gender

False name: DeShawn/LaKeisha

Age: 20

Born in the United States: Yes

Race/Ethnicity: Black or African American

Gender: Man

Academic major: Psychology

Hobbies: Playing music, hanging with friends

Favorite colors: Yellow

Favorite dishes/foods: Fresh salads! Mmmm./Soul food! Mmmm.

Manipulation of food preference

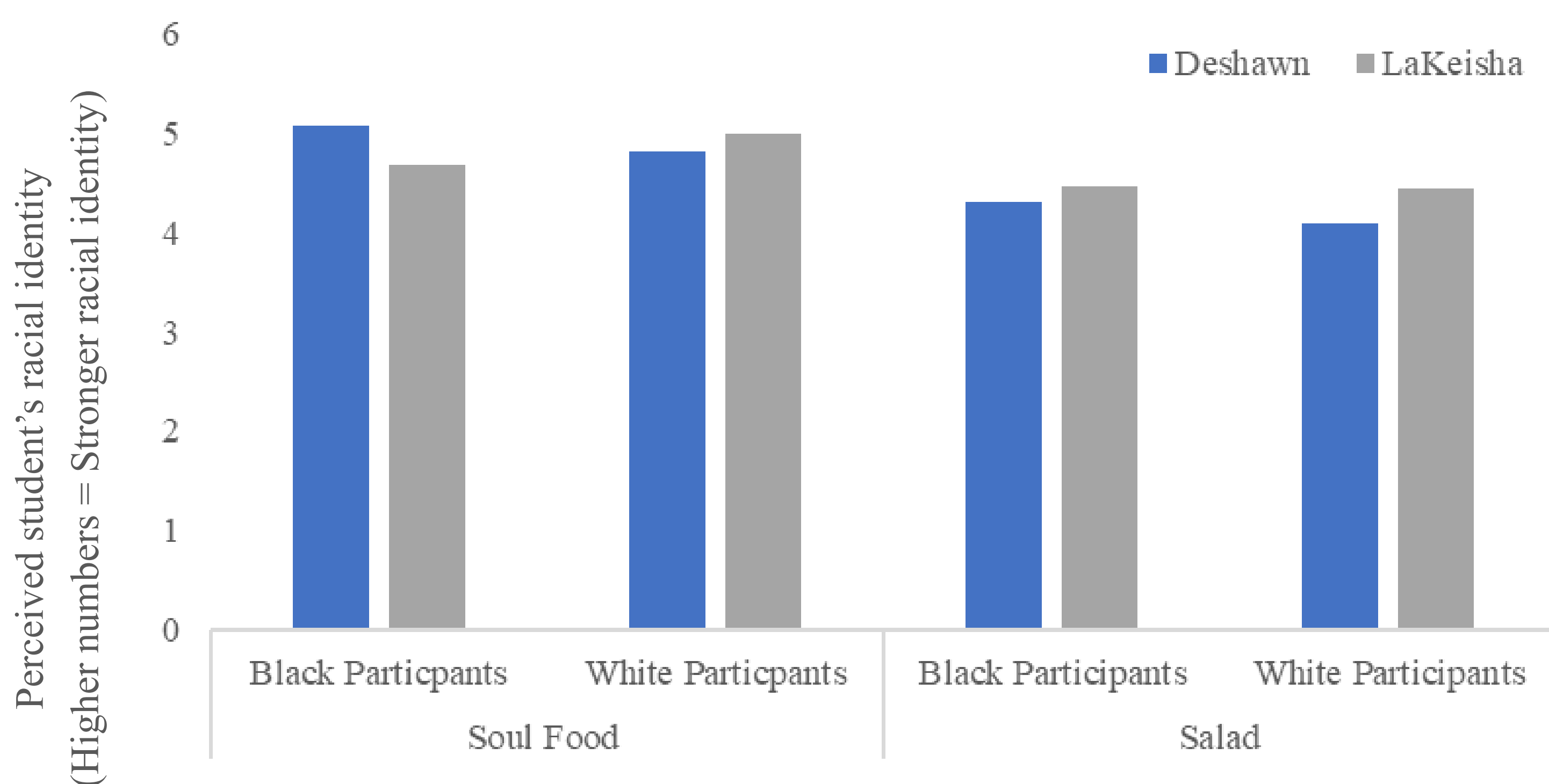
- After reviewing the student profile, participants reported their perceptions of and emotional reactions to the student.

Measures:

- *Perceived student's racial identity*: A modified version of the centrality subscale from the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Crocker and Luhtanen, 1992) was used to assess participants' perceptions how strongly the student identified with her/his racial group.
- *Emotional reactions*: A modified version of Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark & Tellegan, 1988) was used to assess how the student made participants feel.

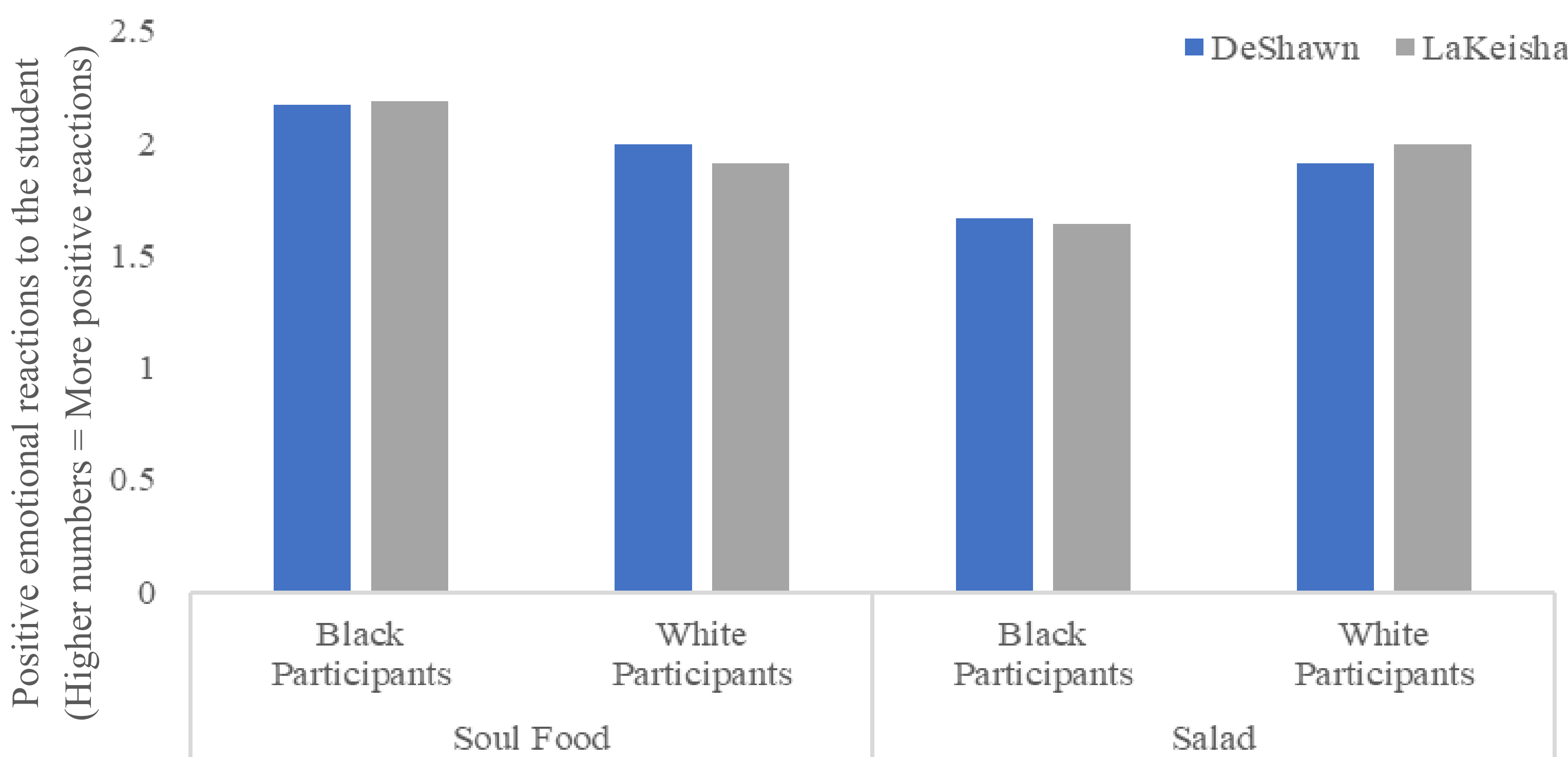
RESULTS

1. Participants' perceptions of the student's racial identity



* The main effect of student food preference; $F(1,278) = 20.75$, $MSE = 21.53$, $p < .001$

2. Participants' positive emotional reactions toward the student



* The two-way interaction between student food preference and participant race: $F(1,279) = 9.67$, $MSE = 6.72$, $p = .001$

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- The target students, regardless of gender, were perceived to have stronger racial identity by both Black and White participants when they preferred “Soul Food,” as opposed to “Fresh salad.”
- Black participants responded more positively to the target students when they preferred “Soul Food” as opposed to “Fresh salad.”
- Food preference may serve as another racial identity cue, by which others may shape their impressions and subsequent relationships.
- For African Americans, fear of identity denial may possibly serve as one psychological barrier to regular consumption of a healthy diet.

Durkin, M. J., & Williams, J. L. (2015). Accusations of acting White: Links to Black students' racial identity and mental health. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 41(1), 26-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009518411505323>
Kasser, C. R., & Proulx, J. S. (2009). Distributing prejudice unequally: Do Whites direct their prejudice toward strongly identified minorities? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(3), 432. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012877>
Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self-evaluation of one's social identity. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 18(3), 302-318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146165292183006>
Ogburn, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of “Acting White” in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review*, 36(1), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:URRE.000004274.83194.b>
Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegan, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(6), 1063-1070. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.6.1063>